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Department of State

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EXCISE

Saigon 2882 8/11/67

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ACTION SS 70

INFO /070 W

P R 111100Z AUG 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4405
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3750
CINCPAC
AMEMBASY VIENTIANE 2129

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 2882

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: A. SAIGON 2774 B. SAIGON 2286

SUB: VIEWS OF TRAN VAN HUONG

1. EVENING AUGUST 10 POLITICAL COUNSELOR AND EMBOFFS HAD DINNER WITH TRAN VAN HUONG [ ] ALSO b-1 ed

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PRESENT WERE [ ] AND NGUYEN VAN BONG, RECOTR OF NIA. NEITHER HUONG NOR HIS SUPPORTERS APPEARED ANXIOUS TO DISCUSS THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY SEVERAL CANDIDATES THAT MORNINL AND SIGNED BY HUONG (REFERENCE A). INSTEAD THEY RETURNED REPEATEDLY TO THE THEME THAT PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES ARE AGAIN PUTTING HEAVY PRESSURES ON THEIR CAMPAIGN WORKERS.

2. BOTH HUONG END [ ] ADMITTED THAT GENERAL THIEU'S COMMENTS AT HIS AUST 8 PRESS CONFERENCE WERE MODERATE AND CONSTRUCTIVE. THEY AGREED THAT HE HAD ACCEPTED THE BLAME FOR THE DONG HA INCIDENT. HOWEVER THEY WERE QUICK b-1 ed

ENCLOSURE BY EB/R

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TO ADD THE THOUGHT THAT KY MADE NO SUCH HELPFUL COMMENTS AND REMAINS QUITE UNRECONSTRUCTED. [ ] WHO WAS IN HUE AT THE TIME OF THE DONG HA INC[illegible]ENT, MADE MUCH OF CHARGES THAT THE HUE AUTHORITIES [illegible]RE PLANNING TO PRESENT THE CANDIDATES WITHAN AUDIENCE COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF CIVIL SERVANTS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL INSTRUCTED TO APPLAUD THE THIEU-KY REPRESENTATIVE AND BOO THE OTHER CANDIDATES.

3. ASKED WHAT RESPONSE HE THINKS THE GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE

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TO THE AUGUST 10 COMMUNIQUE. [ ] TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE EXPECTS A MODERATE AND HELPFUL REPLY. HE BELIEVES THAT THIEU WILL ANSWER THE CANDIDATES' LETTER OF AUGUST 8 IN WRITING. HE THEN COMMENTED THAT IF THE GOVERNMENT FAILS TO ANSWER THE AUGUST 8 LETTER THE NONSEQUENCES WILL BE "VERY GRAVE."

4. [ ] RECOUNTED SEVERAL RATHER VAGUE STORIES OF THREATS AND PRESSURES AGAINST HUONG CAMPAIGN WORKERS. HE ALSO CLAIMED THAT TWO OF NGUYEN HOA HIEP'S CAMPAIGN WORKERS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED. HE AND THE OTHERS PRESENT SAID THAT SUCH UNFAIR TACTICS HAVE BEEN STEPPED UP IN THE PAST FEW DAYS. HUONG SAID HOWEVER, HE IS NOT PLANNING TO WITHDRAW FROM THE RACE UNLESS SUCH PRESSURES GO BEYOND ACCEPTABLE LIMITS. HUONG AGAIN TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE WOULD INFORM EMBASSY AT LEAST THREE DAYS IN ADVANCE IF HE DECIDES TO WITHDRAW. SOME MENTION WAS MADE OF AUGUST10, SUGGESTING THATHUONG WILL MAKE A DECISION ON CONTINUING IN THE RACE ABOUT THEN.

5. HUONG AND COMPANY WERE ALSO ANXIOUS TO TALK A OUT RUMORS THAT SEVERAL OF THE CIVILIAN CANDIDATES HAVE "SOLD OUT" TO

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THE GOVERNMENT AND ARE RUNNING PRIMARILY TO CUT INTO HUONG'S VOTES. THEY CLAIMED THAT SUU, BINH, QUAT, AND CO WERE IN NHA TRANG WITH GENERAL THI[illegible]ON AUGUST 10 ENGAGED IN "ILLEGAL" CAMPAIGNING. ACCORDING TO HUONG, SUU'S PRESENCE IN NHA TRANG

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EXPLAINS DA 'S RELUCTANCE TO SIGN THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 10.

6. HUONG EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT KY EXPECTS TO CONTROL THE LEGISLATURE IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT. HUONG THINKS KY HOPES TO USE THIS CONTROL TO MAKE TWO AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION: THE VICE PRESIDENT WILL BE PERMITTED TO SERVE SIMULTANEOUSLY IN OTHER GOVERNMENT POSITIONS, SUCH AS THAT OF PRIME MINISTER: AND THE VICE PRESIDENT WILL SUCCEED TO THE PRESIDENCY IN CASE OF THE DEATH OF THE PRESIDENT.

7. COMMENT: (A) HUONG EVIDENTLY THINKS HE CAN LET SOME MORE MILEAGE OUT OF THE DONG HA INCIDENT, THOUGH HIS RELUCTANCE TO DISCUSS IT SUGGESTS HE MAY NOT PUSH IT MUCH FURTHER.
(B) SOME OF THE TALK OF INCREASED PRESSURE ON HUONG CAMPAIGN WORKERS WAS PROBABLY DESIGNED TO JUSTIFY THE COMMUNIQUE OF AUGUST 10, HOWEVER THERE MAY ALSO BE SOME TRUTH TO

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THE ALLEGATIONS. IN ANY EVENT, IT DOES NOT APPEAR FOR THE MEMENT THAT HUONG IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING WITHDRAWAL FROM THE RACE AS A RESULT OF SUIH PRESSURES. WE WILL CONTINUE WATCHING SUCH DEVELOPMENTS VERY CLOSELY.
(C) WE CANNOT CONFIRM THE REPORT THAT SUU, CO , BINH, AND QUAT WERE "ILLEGALLY" CAMPAIGNING WITH THIEU IN NHA TRANG. THIEU IS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN IN PHAN THIEU AND PHAN RANG AS WELL AS NHA TRANG AUGUST 9 AND 10, AND HE WAS PROBABLY DOING A LITTLE UNOFFICIAL CAMPAIGNING THERE. KY WAS IN SADEC YESTERDAY, MOST LIKELY OCCUPIED IN THE SAME WAY. OUR BEST INFORMATION AT THE MEMENT IS THAT SUU WAS IN SAIGON AUGUST 10, HOWEVER. WE ARE INCLINED TO BE SKEPTICAL OF THE ALLEGED
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SELL OUT", BUT WILL BE CHECKING ON IT. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT TEN CIVILIAN SLATES MADE UP OF SUCH EGOCENTRIC INDIVIDUALS AS FOR EXAMPLE SUU, BINH, AND CO WOULD UNITE EVEN IN OPPOSITION TO THE MILITARY. HOWEVER IT IS POSSIBLE THAT ONE OR MORE WOULD BREAK RANKS WITH OTHER CIVILIAN CANDIDATES TO GAIN APPARENT ADVANTAGE.
(D) HUONG APPEARED VERY RELAXED AND IN COMPARATIVELY

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GOOD SPIRITS THROUGHOUT THE EVENING. STRAIN OF THE CAMPAIGN

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SEEMS NOT SO FAR TO HAVE MUCH EFFECT ON HIM.
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